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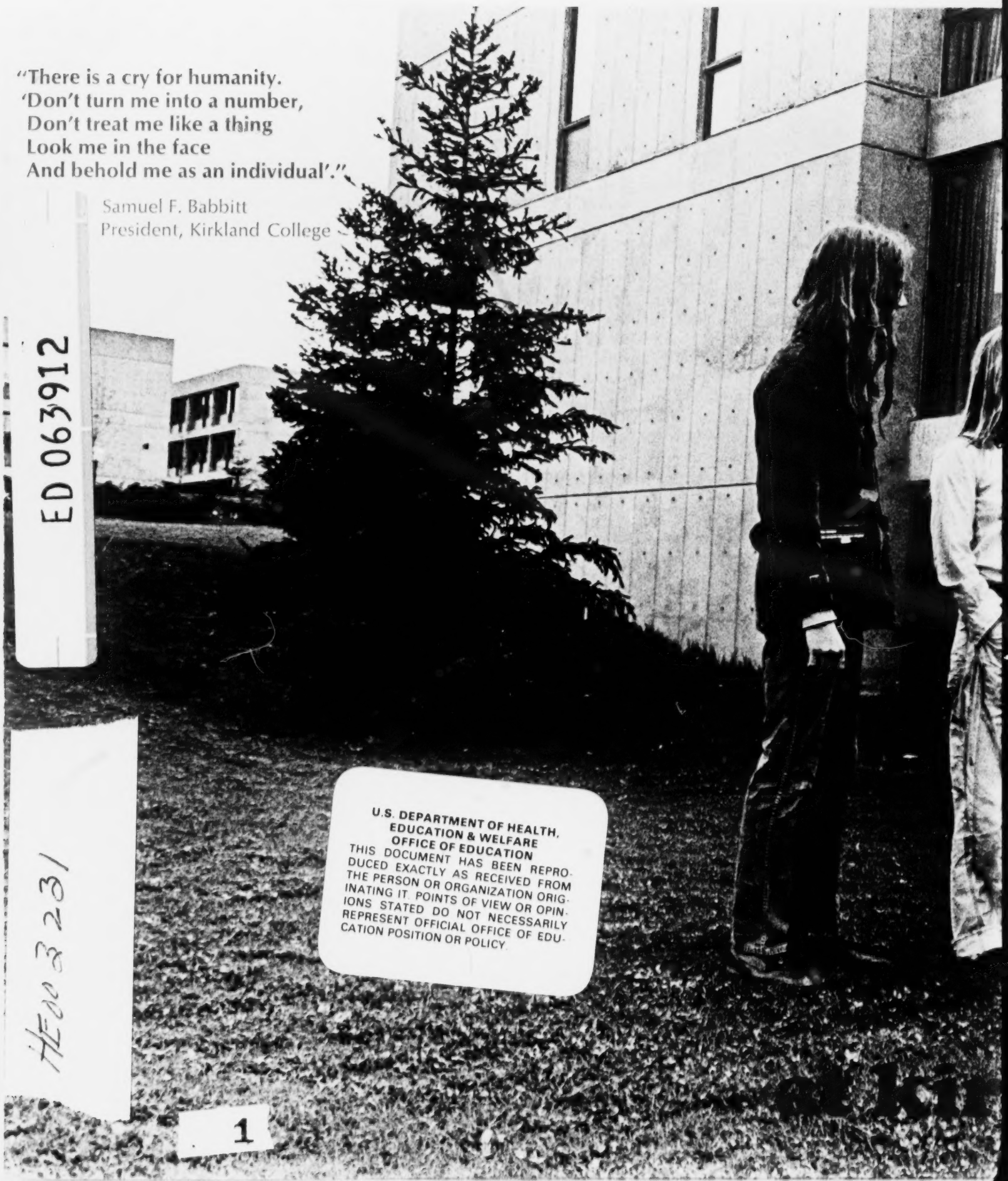
ABSTRACT

This document presents a summary of events that took place at and comments about a conference that was held at Kirkland College in Clinton, New York, on "What to Do with a Women's College in a Sexist Society." Among the presentations at the conference was a panel of husband and wife teams, one of which was employed by the college. Questions were asked of the panelists regarding the role in the home, the role as primary breadwinner, etc. It became clear that the women in the couples game fit the stereotyped role of wife, mother, and housekeeper regardless of whether they held jobs themselves. Comments by male participants at the conference show that they came away with a new insight as to the needs of women as professionals. Comments by students indicate that the conference gave them a feeling of community with other women and an insight into what their future might hold beyond childbearing. (HS)

"There is a cry for humanity.
'Don't turn me into a number,
Don't treat me like a thing
Look me in the face
And behold me as an individual'."

Samuel F. Babbitt
President, Kirkland College



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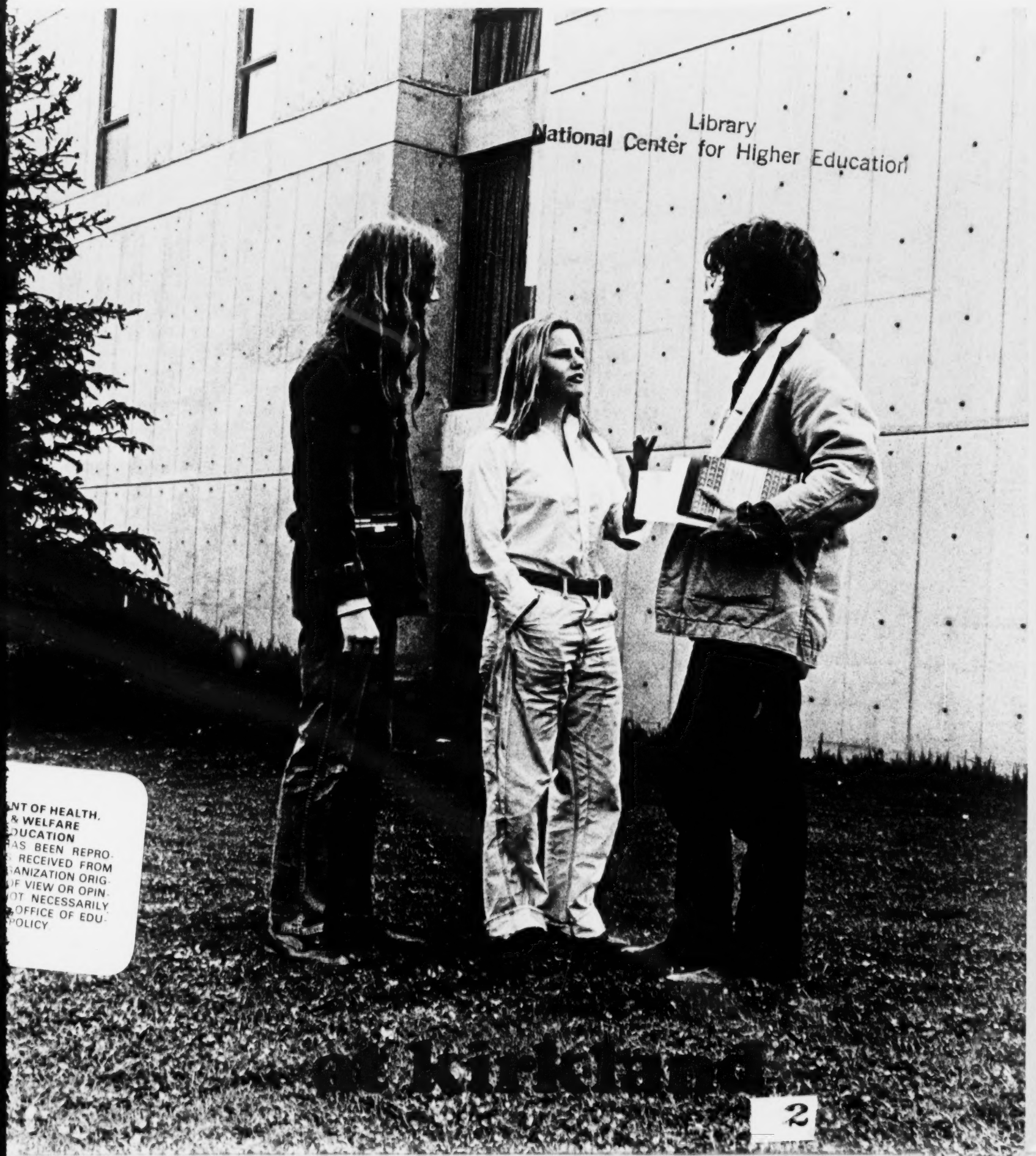

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A Report on Kirkland's Women's Conference

At Kirkland is a magazine about life at Kirkland College, in Clinton, New York.

We chose to do the first issue of the magazine on a conference on Kirkland as a college for women, or "What to Do with a Women's College in a Sexist Society" which was held on campus February 6 and 7, 1972. The conference was planned by a committee of students, faculty, and administrators who drew up a schedule for the weekend including an opening session, ten different workshops, and summary sessions. The workshops were each headed by an outside "expert" (professionals in education, female studies, and sociology), a faculty member, and a student. Workshop topics ranged from Kirkland's Educational Goals and Innovation to Sex Roles, Life Styles, and "After Kirkland, What?"

The outside participants brought fresh perspective to the college and insights into what was happening in the world beyond the college campus. They included Bernice Sandler, Executive Associate of the American Association of Colleges, who was previously Executive Director of the Women's Equity Action League, an organization that has filed over 250 formal charges of sexist hiring practices of educational institutions; Adele Simmons, Dean of Jackson College, who has recently been appointed Dean of Student Affairs at Princeton University; Elga Wasserman, Special Assistant to the President on the Education of Women at Yale University; and Larry Chisolm, Director of American Studies at the University of Buffalo and teacher of a study of comparative cultures.

What happened at the Women's Conference goes far, far beyond the dittoed schedules, capitalized topics, and the quiet discussion so often associated with scheduled workshops. The campus became alive with animated, intense discussion of problems and questions that involve us as women and Kirkland as a women's college. Feelings and thoughts of students and faculty alike were piqued by workshop discussions — the reactions surfaced and were articulated — more of us became excited, one after another — BAM, BAM, BAM — we were growing excited together as vague impressions, long plaguing us, were described by someone else — we gained understanding of ourselves, the people around us, and Kirkland — in a rash of new discovery. We realized that personal experience does connect with sociological realities, that being a woman in the seventies means that we share a responsibility to join with other people concerned with changing stereotyped and constricting patterns in our society.

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The outside "experts" could not understand why many of us kept separating our college experience from the "real world." CLICK—and some of us realize the fatality of the sense of transciency that college often evokes, that many of us take our Kirkland world less seriously than we should. We must be truly **present** in our world wherever we are, if we are to effectively mold our world.

Being a sophomore and having missed the pioneer woman era, it was my first experience with the Kirkland "community feeling." The spirit is really there. Although discussion pointed out how difficult it is for a college of "individually motivated learners" to get together for collective effort, we were still making the effort to look at ourselves and at Kirkland and communicate what we saw.

So what does one do with a women's college in a sexist society? This magazine reflects some student, faculty, and participant impressions of the conference and answers to this question. The answers involve faculty hiring practices and some women's studies courses, but much, much more — we Kirkland students are women, and in the seventies, personally and politically, that is an exciting place to be.

—Abby Goulder, Kirkland '74

Couples

Rosalind Hoffa is Assistant Dean of Students. She appeared in "Couples" at the Opening Session of the Women's Conference with her husband, William Hoffa, Assistant Professor of English.

To the strains of Mendelsohn's Wedding March six couples walked side by side down the aisle of the Hamilton College Chapel and heralded the beginning of the first group session of the Women's Conference, "Couples." The participants were to have questions fired at them by two inquisitors, to be quizzed about their jobs, families and activities. Titters and rustles of expectation swept through the pews as the crowd recognized the president, the dean of the faculty, a professor of history, of literature, of drama and of music, arm in arm with their respective wives. This was indeed an auspicious group to begin the proceedings — to reveal the 'sexist' patterns in their 'liberated' lives.

The questions began relentlessly. The seriousness of their import was disguised, for the tone and atmosphere was light-hearted, the mood mock-serious. The first round was fast and snappy; responses were made in silence by holding up cardboard masks, which served to reduce each individual to a bare stereotype of his (and her) sex. "Whose career got established first?" "Whose career brought you to Clinton?" Male masks were raised and the females waited patiently for their turns while the men claimed that their careers dominated family life and dictated mobility. But the women were not neglected. The questions turned to the home and domestic responsibilities. Here the blond curls began to wave and say "I" to "who extends the dinner invitation?" "Who makes the breakfast — and the bed?"

Meanwhile images of women through the ages flashed on a screen, often ironically appropriate
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often ironically appropriate to the questions in the air. While the women declaimed their servitude, erratic, faceless females appeared in pop-art behind them. Though styles have changed, the image remains the same. Like the "Liberty" magazine sketches of the 20's, it is the damsel, helpless and forlorn, reaching for the arms of the all powerful male.

Masks were laid down and the responses became more personal as the questions searched the past, discussed the present and probed the future. "Are you satisfied with the way in which your formal education prepared you for your career?" To the relief of students in the audience, the general answer to this, even when two wives had temporarily foregone their own careers in favor of their husbands', was indeed positive. So it was to the query, "Did you expect to marry?" They roared to hear one participant break the chain and say no. The couples varied in age and often correspondingly in their responses. The older the couple, the more reflective the reply. They had obviously come to terms with problems like how many children, when, and their effect on the man's career and, more poignantly, the woman's. Children were seen by all couples without them as a hurdle to be overcome and an unavoidable barrier, welcome or no. Away from family and finances the couples were asked to fantasize a sexual metamorphosis and consider their monetary state as a member of the opposite sex. For once the responses were unanimous. The women were sure that they could earn more in such a case, would be able to advance further, have more freedom and influence, both socially and professionally. The questions continued to search and reveal inequalities of social roles and opportunities and in the amusing replies, sexist patterns continued to emerge. Perhaps the response to one question summed up unequal commitments and division of labor in marriage. It asked, "What percentage of time do you spend on job, domestic responsibility, leisure, and recreation?" It was no surprise that the weight of domestic chores lay with the woman, even when that woman, too, had her career.

For the student watching this intriguing "ceremony," these were moments to remember. Often serious faculty and impervious administrators were willing to open a few doors and let in those questions rarely asked but often present in their minds. What is it really like to be married? How do children fit in with a career, if they do? What does a woman lose, and indeed what does she gain? Though not claiming to hold the key, "Couples" raised some questions, answered others, and finally turned to the audience with a pointed query. "Would **you** marry again?" — "In ten years will anybody?" echoed through the chapel and hung there while the six couples lay down their masks and left the stage, certainly more conscious of continuing disparities and inequalities in their own lives.

—Rosalind Hoffa

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Opening Remarks

Dr. Annette K. Baxter was the Honorary Chairman of the conference. She delivered the following speech at the Opening Session.

Ada Leverson, as you all know, was, even among female British novelists, a woman of outrageous affectations. In an essay about her, Osbert Sitwell quotes this remark of hers: "Though not affected myself, I like other people to be." I've been tempted to paraphrase Ms. Leverson's witticism in describing my response to the burgeoning conferences on women — on their status, dilemma, future or any one of a dozen of their other quandaries. While Ada Leverson claimed not to be affected herself, she liked others to be; while I am not a militant myself, I am glad there are some around. As a matter of fact, when I am present at such conferences, I often find myself lapsing into an excessive admiration of my fellow delegates, and my mood at times approaches vulgarly close to the anthropological gamesmanship of Ashley Montagu, who would have us believe in something called the natural superiority of women. As the women pull off their name tags and the conference scatters, my ears still ringing, sympathetically ringing, with eloquent defenses of career without home, of home with career, of career in spite of home, of vocational counseling, upgrading of women's jobs; with indignant exposés of community apathy to feminine talents as well as apathy to feminine needs; with heroic sagas of one woman against the world; "the world" most often consisting alternately of sympathetic but harried husbands or energetically successful, but male chauvinist husbands; in addition to the familiar cast of unreliable baby sitters, unradicalized next door neighbors, and indifferent local politicians. My admiration for those vocal women is at this point augmented by equal portions of my own real and vicarious victimization, and, while I am conscious of the dangers of disaffection as a regular thing, I also know that some disaffection has historically preceded the righting of many wrongs. Thus at the close of these conferences I am often in a grimly self-righteous neo-feminist state of mind, triggered for action.

The trouble usually arises some weeks later when I encounter one of these suffering sisters at somebody's home. Now, the very recital of hardships that I found so bracing to my feminist sensibilities at the most recent conference on the status of women strikes me as tedious and altogether unlovely. Whether the conversation concerns the insurmountable dreariness of a domestic routine, or the rarified trials of holding fast to some professional lifeline, one's response is always the same: a curious aesthetic displeasure. In a purely social setting the woman whom we are most apt to admire radiates, if not rosy contentment with her lot, at least enlightened acceptance of it. What matters

is the style in which this hypothetical lady privately assumes and publically espouses her femininity. Ideally, her style should proclaim that her fate as a woman in today's world is overarchingly ambiguous, and that hers, like any mature life, must philosophically acknowledge, as well as vigorously protest, the conflicts of which it is a part.

Now, let me turn momentarily to these conflicts as they are felt by today's young women. Without yet having seriously grappled with the most grinding feminine conflicts, young women today sense that such conflicts have to do less with economic and legal injustices—although these are still with us—than with intense psychological pressures. These young women will not be struggling for the achievement of rights, they will be hungering for the satisfaction of new drives, emotional, vocational, political, intellectual, and so on, products of the increased expectations and opportunities created by the society around them. In the face of those expectations and opportunities, feminist militancy may conceivably be only a transitional stance.

The glorious futures traditionally envisioned for young women by college presidents (usually male) and their deans (usually female) can no longer be dismissed as assembly rhetoric: They are not that far off. With rapidly spiralling public awareness of the relationship between wasted women power and the besetting "women problem," there are clearly going to be unprecedented efforts on the part of the government and industry to **utilize** that power. The dreams of a so-called fuller life will daily be translated from rhetoric to reality. What few of us have anticipated, perhaps, is that under these new conditions, it may eventually seem an act of self-indulgence or perversity when an educated woman chooses to commit herself primarily to the homemaker's role, even when she has good reason to feel that in her case it offers the more humanly useful life. (Signs of this disapproval are already apparent in those infallible indicators, the women's magazines, where some combination of home and career is conspicuously being given the green light.) If this reversal of public opinion should occur, will our young women have the courage to resist social pressures and make of their lives what they will? Will they see that the integrity of their lives is to be measured by their own disciplined choice of a life style, and not by society's changing notions of what women should be doing?

Here indeed is the prototype of all their future "decision-making" as women. Their response to it will have unpredictable long-range consequences. However, right now we **can** predict that, in the course of facing up to acting upon these decisions, they will be experiencing certain emotions in quantities unknown to their predecessors. Guilt, despair, frustration, envy, and anger will be the demons they may have to exorcise as they strive to discover their styles of living. In sum, higher self-expectations and actual opportunities, together with overwhelming societal pressures, even the very success they achieve, which

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may create its own need to transcend itself, seem to me to present an obstacle course to the achievement of a satisfying life more formidable than anything we of an older generation faced.

—Annette K. Baxter, Ph.D.
Kirkland Trustee
Professor of History
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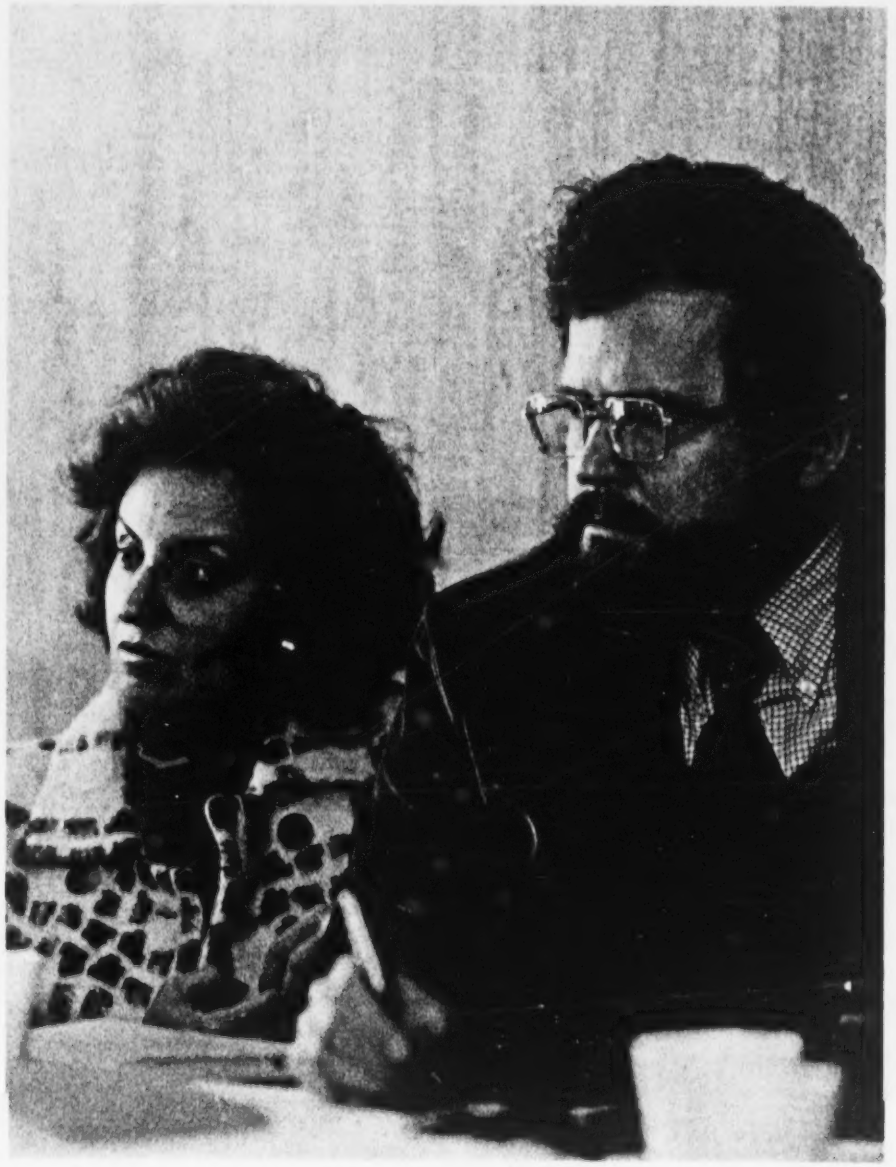

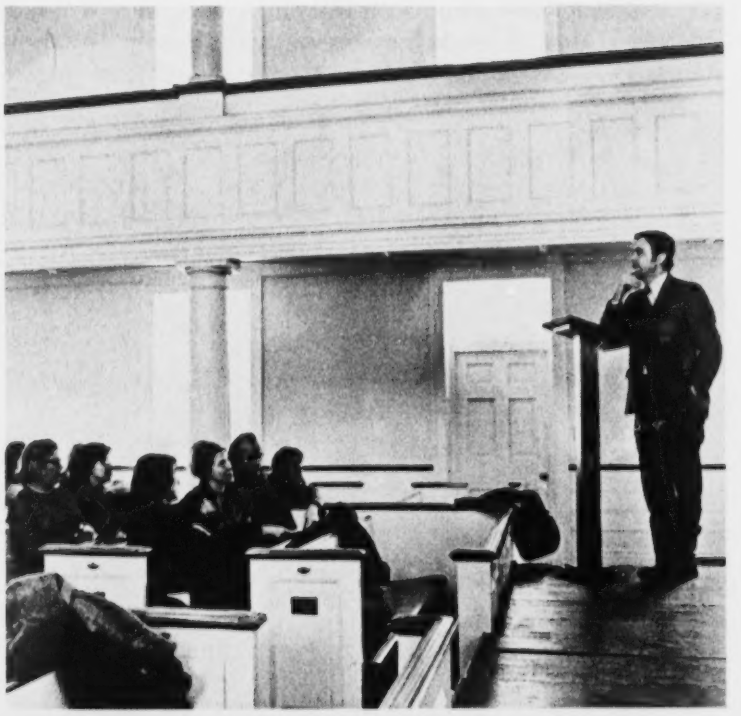

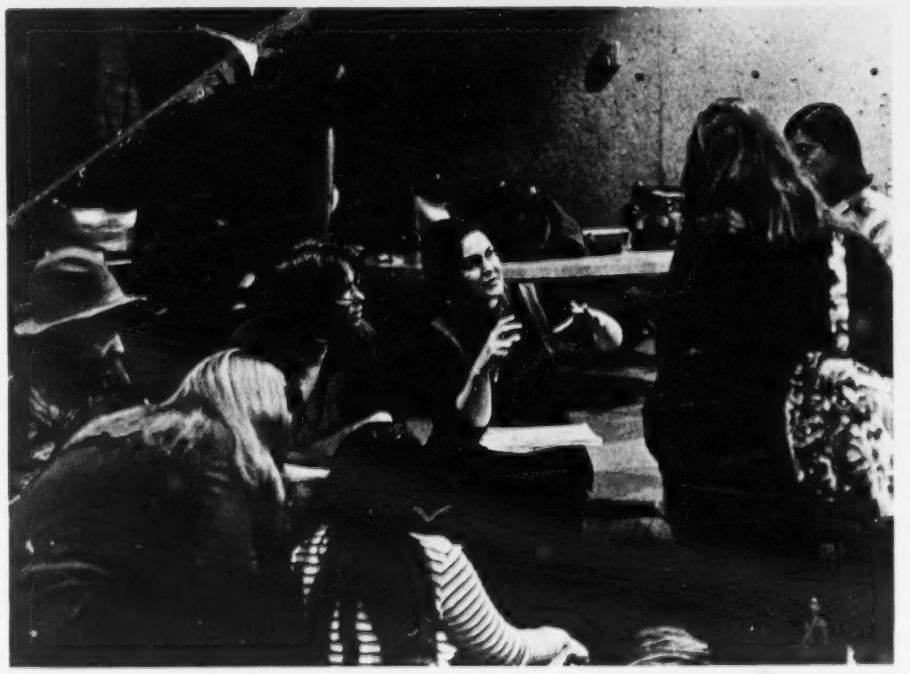

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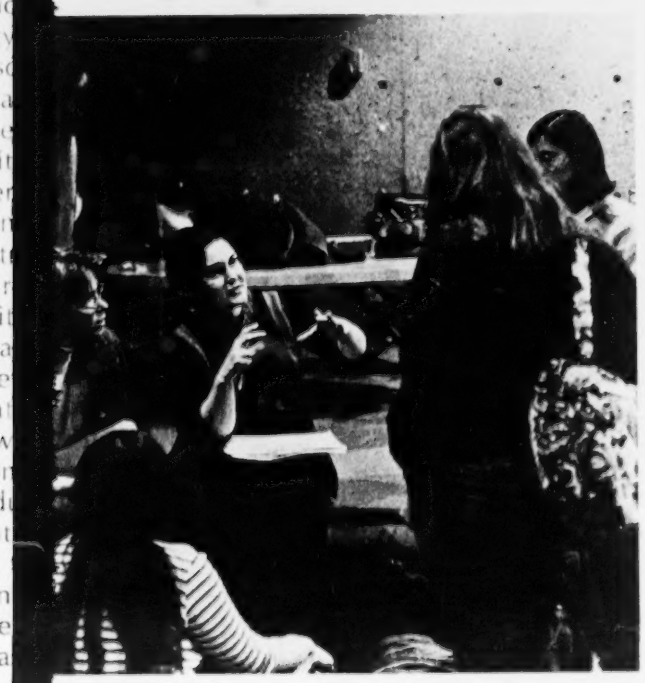

Summary Statement on the Conference

Dr. Babbitt's summary statement was written following a session on Monday morning in which the outside participants discussed their impressions of the conference. He delivered this statement in the Summary Session that afternoon.

This statement is necessarily subjective, the attempt of one person to compile the impressions and conclusions of many others, springing from the discussions and presentations during two days of meetings.

One must begin by reporting a general context which all of our visitors have sensed at Kirkland. It is their impression that many of our students are enduring a psychological and sociological isolation, largely self-imposed and the product of their upper middle-class backgrounds and the permissiveness of their upbringing, but, in part, the result of the college's willingness to encourage individual patterns of curriculum and of life. Such isolation is not unique to Kirkland, but it is virulent here.

Our visitors find that a pervasive sense of divorce from reality haunts our students. They see this perception as false. It stems, perhaps, from a failure on the part of students to acknowledge the reality about them, the reality of which they are a part. The college, on the other hand, does not make sufficiently overt the ways in which it participates in the society and is the result of social and economic factors, some unique and some defining of the society as a whole.

There was general unanimity in discussions concerning the goals of the college. The central goal, it is felt, is to assist students towards an ideal of a critical, autonomous being, free of past negative conditioning about herself as a woman, able to act as an individual, and able to act in relation to society with realistic confidence.

The central finding of the conference is that the development of such a goal requires the student and the college to be involved in a continual critique of the society and the student's relationship to it, a continual examination of her very nature and the outside forces which shape and define her. It also requires a heightened sense on the part of students that their role at such a college defined as feminine and innovative, will be more than usually difficult in terms of the demands it imposes on them. Because they are women they may not expect to have to produce at a significantly high level; because the program will be non-traditional, it may be suspect in many quarters.

It is felt that the proposition of an on-going and radical critique from a feminist viewpoint can provide the kind of direction, the kind of involvement and purpose, which our students seek and do find.

Much has been said about the individuality and the privatism of

this student generation. Our panelists feel strongly that the college can develop a number of different models of collective behavior which could, once more, involve students in joint enterprises, hold up for them group options not in themselves required, but requiring choice on the part of students as to their participation or overt denial.

In specifically curricular terms, there were three major elements suggested as needing development here. The first clearly has to do with feminist studies. Proposals for injecting more such studies in Kirkland's curriculum range from the addition of one or two courses to the establishment of a major center for female studies resulting from four or five appointments in the area. Pervading all such suggestions is the clear imperative that all courses consciously include those elements related to their content which involve the role and definition of women, elements which traditionally have been excluded. It is suggested that the feminist viewpoint provides an ideal platform for a critique of past developments in every discipline. It provides an exciting and germane point of departure for the development of new perspectives.

Second, it is clear that the workshops produced a mandate to work towards more active bridges between the campus and the society, a program of Action Studies. We are urged to test our classroom theory in the world and to evaluate our experience in the classroom. Proposals ranged from reasonably traditional field studies to suggestions for a mandatory year away from campus in the working world.

A third concept around which a number of ideas have clustered is a critique of the organization of knowledge itself. Kirkland made its first tentative steps in this direction with the denial of academic departments. The proposals now being brought to it would suggest that the organization of knowledge in courses might proceed across even divisional lines, and the college could provide a base for the critique of the organization of knowledge. Its curriculum might include an examination of the possibilities of reorganizing knowledge and learning, as well as the examination of problems neglected because they lie between existing definitions.

Essentially, these proposals indicate the possibility of increasing experimentation in course methodology and content, but we are alerted to the fact that all such experimentation must take place in an atmosphere of rigorous and careful study. Our students will not be served by a system which does not insist on the exercise of intellectual muscle.

Our participants urge us to experiment further with patterns of teaching and learning, particularly expressed as the working out of alternate possibilities to the traditional student/teacher axis. The traditional pattern is one which most of our students have experienced for fifteen years before coming to us. We know that we wish to graduate them free of the necessity of this kind of pattern. Therefore, we should be introducing them regularly
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The Conference prods us to expand our thinking in regard to three other elements: first, it is clear that our own students see the necessity of exposure to a far wider spectrum of age than is represented in the faculty, than is certainly represented in the narrow span of undergraduate life as now defined. We can work towards this through the development of day-care centers, our involvement with elementary level learning situations, the encouragement of older women as students who are in every walk of life, including retired.

Second, we need to expand our concept of the location of education. We now encourage, in some instances, our students to take portions of their education abroad or at other institutions. We need to think this through carefully, and to make explicit our encouragement of the use of educational resources wherever they best fit the needs of our students.

Finally, in regard to the time spent en route to the degree and the density of the workload during such time, we need to examine far more flexible possibilities. At the present time we allow a degree to be completed in three years or, with special permission, to take longer than the prescribed four. Nevertheless, we continually make the assumption

that the degree is awardable upon the completion of a certain number of courses and the regular degree requirements. In the original concept of Kirkland, we felt that there should be one or more benchmarks which would certify the readiness of students to progress to a second or final stage of study. The re-institution of such benchmarks would make possible far more flexibility in curriculum in preparation for the degree. Furthermore, the introduction of a contract system between faculty and students would allow for flexibility of time and density of study.

In regard to the personnel of the college, the panelists were unanimous in their strong conviction that there should be more women on the faculty. This is in keeping with a recent resolution of the Board which has requested the administration to raise the percentage of women on the faculty and to report to the Board on the practical program of action adopted to do so. It is also necessary to assure the sensitization of all existing faculty and staff to the issues involved in the growing self-awareness of women. The college must adopt programs to this end. It follows that we should make overt our criteria for recruiting faculty who are sensitive to this area, as well as possessing the qualities of teaching and scholarship we seek.

The community must find ways of bringing issues of deep concern to women to its own attention, overtly, concretely, and early. It may be that we will have to be involved in the sensitization of our colleagues at Hamilton also, and of students who share our classroom.

In addition to the curricular programs designed to relate the college to its society, Kirkland is urged to undertake a Program for a New Professionalism. What is proposed is an investigation of the relationship between the undergraduate institution and a growing number of graduate institutions in medicine, law and graduate study which are shaping their training to new values and therefore seeking more flexibly trained and oriented students. It is our assumption that such an investigation might lead to a reinforcement of our curricular patterns and of our critical stance in regard to the world of knowledge.

In its deliberations, the panel of visitors reflected numerous debates during the course of the weekend on the relationship between Kirkland's role as a college for women and its mandate for innovation. There was seen to be no conflict between these goals but rather a reinforcement in which the feminist critique might provide the fulcrum from which both methodology and organization might be moved.

The college has been challenged by these deliberations and suggestions. Our task now is to formulate these ideas into practical proposals and to submit them to scrutiny and debate. Then comes legislation, adoption or rejection, and the specific implementation of programs which are approved.

—Samuel F. Babbitt, Ph.D.
President, Kirkland College

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Kate McGraw raised the following issues in a conference workshop entitled "NOW" and discussed them with Dr. Babbitt at the Summary Session.

My mind fights. It rages. It is confused. It is dulled. And a spark lights it again. Only to add to the paradoxes that already exist. Making me fight, rage, become confused and dull myself to the pain once more.

Do you know what it feels like to pick up an intellectual work which speaks of the world only in the terms of men — and you're a woman?

Do you know what it feels like to neither want to get married nor want to have children in a society which trained you to accept the roles of wife and mother as your means of self-definition?

Do you know what it feels like to just want to make one large effort to change the world in some small way and being told to do that by developing your "inner space?"

If so you can understand why I am infuriated by Sam Babbitt's statement in "Particulars," (Kirkland's catalog):

> Note well, however, that we will not measure success in terms of the jobs our graduates will hold, the honors they will receive — all of which are particularly male ways of measuring worth. Our emphasis will be on the intangible richness of the internal lives these people will live, not the external. We are engaged in humanistic education.

The world we live in would certainly be a better place if persons were judged on the value of their internal lives. In order to maintain sanity, however, it is necessary to be realistic.

The world is generally a cold one and is prone to judge in terms of externals. One does not live twenty-one years in a female body without realizing that. Granted, we need not accept that, but again, let us be realistic. Very simply, the status quo has the power which directs the actions of the world. It seems logical to me that if we are going to succeed in changing the sexist attitudes in this society on its standards while maintaining and spreading our newly-found perceptions and values. That is, if Kirkland is to be a truly innovative institution, it must judge its students in terms of the "male" values (jobs and honors) as well as the "female" values (rich internal lives) of traditional society. For, it is only by firing the traditionally male and female elements in all of us that the members of society will be liberated.

—Kate McGraw, Kirkland '73

The following is a statement by Dr. Millicent McIntosh, one of the incorporators of Kirkland and one of the chief consultants in its design.

The editor of this publication has asked me if I would write a short account of the influences on my life that have made it possible for me to continue my work after I was married and while I was bringing up five children.

I was born in Baltimore at the end of the Victorian age. One would think that I would have been destined for respectable domesticity, but two factors intervened. My family were Quakers on both sides, and my mother's family included several pioneers, who helped establish equal education for women and were leaders in the suffrage movement.

So from my earliest years I was influenced by my mother, who was a member of the first class at Bryn Mawr College. Although she was married and had a family, she had an active career as a volunteer. She was a leader of unpopular causes: prison reform, racial equality, and the rights of workers. I can never remember a time when I didn't expect to go to college and to have a career.

At Bryn Mawr, along with all my college generation, I came under the sway of M. Carey Thomas, president of the college, and my mother's oldest sister. She used to speak to us in chapel three times a week, and we all found her so exciting and unpredictable that we thronged to hear her. She shared with us her delight in the world of the intellect and her passion for travel and for politics. She impressed on us our responsibility as educated women not to be submerged by our parents or our marriages, but to accept a commitment to leadership. It was natural — even inevitable — for me to take a Ph.D. and to enter the field of teaching. This led on to administration, and from 1929 until 1962, when I retired, I was privileged to hold exciting jobs, at Bryn Mawr, at the Brearley School for Girls, in New York, and then at Barnard College.

In 1932, shortly after I became Head of the Brearley, I had married a children's doctor who had recently been appointed Professor of Pediatrics and Director of the Babies Hospital at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Nothing could have been better for my career, because Dr. McIntosh had had unfortunate experiences with educated mothers who concentrated all their energies on their children! He never wanted me to give up my work, and he helped and encouraged me in every way. I was able to arrange my hours to suit my family routine, and the school trustees. I was blessed with good health, and we were lucky enough to have healthy kids. By the time they were pretty well grown up, I had the chance to go to Barnard.

So it is clear that I had working for me all the circumstances that were necessary for success in combining marriage and a career: the strong influence of my mother and my aunt, a sympathetic and supporting husband, and jobs in institutions that were also sympathetic.

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One might conclude that such a combination of circumstances is too unusual to be useful to others. I am convinced, however, that many young women are able to reproduce my experience in its basic elements. These are embodied in one essential principle: that self-fulfillment depends on keeping one's intellect and talents alive and growing.

No two individuals and no two marriages are alike. But if a woman is determined to continue her work in whatever form is practicable for her (part-time, volunteer, further study, etc.), she will find ways of doing so. Those of us that have had the good fortune to combine the two roles have found that it brings infinite rewards. Each role contributes to the other, and one's relationship with one's husband and children is thereby greatly enriched.

—Millicent C. McIntosh
Ph.D., L.H.D., LL.D., Litt.D. (Emeritus)
Kirkland Trustee
President Emeritus, Barnard College

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With just a bit of trepidation, I, male, Hamilton, and quite probably an unknowing sexist, ventured into the women's conference of Kirkland College. For me it was a massive sensitizing experience. For the Kirkland campus, the conference not only provided a noticeable boost in morale but also assessed the present and vigorously moved to the future.

The days following the conference bore the fruits of its success. The activists were more active and the uninvolved quickly slipped into commitment. Everyone felt a sense of community — a word which before the conference was alleged to be overused and underdeveloped but now described reality.

Personally, my reading of Millet, Freidan, and Greer was not as successful in developing my consciousness of sexism as was the opening session's "role-playing" sequence. The seminars increased my belief that students and faculty of our schools are able, if they want, to overcome obsessions with identifying targets and stereotypes. For once, the cynics were stifled by common sense and a desire to be constructive. People cared, participated and produced positive results. The two-day conference re-inforced my faith in the Kirkland philosophy of education as an equal partner in the concept of coordination with Hamilton College.

After the conference I was still male, Hamilton, and quite probably unknowingly sexist. But my relationship with Kirkland was deeper and my faith in her future was greater. I had taken part in the confirmation of Kirkland. In two days she became an adult — fully realizing her role, her goals, and her identity.

—Jerry Ryan, Hamilton '72

The Women's Center: A Personal Note

The February Conference revitalized, or to be quite fair, reactivated the Women's Center. With the pressures of the isolation and immobility imposed by late winter snow, a far too silent predominately male faculty, and innocent unliberated frat boys, a feminine consciousness was difficult to raise, or even maintain, for most students here.

The conference served as a shot of adrenalin gently given by what was, I think, a worried administration. It seems sad to me that at a college such as Kirkland what is meant to be the impetus for the conference did not come from the students. I am not sure if the reasons I have mentioned begin to explain why this was so and they certainly do not justify the students' passivity and irresponsibility towards their sex.

Yet, as a result of the conference, things have been happening at the Women's Center. Regular weekly meetings are being held and more students are coming to them, a group of students attended a regional National Organization of Women conference, letters have been sent to the Divisions, Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, urging that a feminist viewpoint be taken when applicable in the teaching of various courses, students and faculty are giving presentations in their disciplines, plans are being made for student-run courses and independent studies about women, a radio show examining the sexism in contemporary music is being planned, older women have been invited to our meetings and will hopefully broaden our necessarily limited vision, and students are working on the formation of a collection of books about women which will be housed in the Kirner-Johnson buildings and should strengthen our spirits and studies.* In addition, we are beginning to talk about and perhaps understand what made us the women and people we are.

—Pennylynn Kornicker, Kirkland '74
Co-chairman, Kirkland Women's Center

*Funded by gifts in honor of Trustee Emeritus McIntosh.

Lettuce and Discretion

I was one of few male participants in the Kirkland conference on the function of a women's college. Perhaps for that reason, the whole thing seemed at first a confusing, sometimes unsettling experience. To any women's movement, abstractions like "sexist society" are not the enemies or obstacles to change; people are. Especially men people.

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At a conference called to discuss the place of women's college in such a society, held **at** a women's college, where all invited speakers, but one, and the vast majority of participants were women, no one needed to hang a card on my neck to let me or anybody else know: if I were not the enemy, I sure as hell looked like one.

During luncheon, I do not recall contributing excessively to the conversation. Around me sat professional women organizers, minds honed sharp in debate with male chauvinists, carefully monitoring conversations for signs of covert bias. I was assailed by the thought that to open my male mouth might have been to show bias. I opened it instead to chew on lettuce, perhaps to smile or agree. Across the table, women threw out and traded stories of triumph over male prejudices, injustice, persecution. My low profile was not cowardly; it was discreet.

Munching quietly on lettuce and discretion, I realized that part of my reaction to the conference luncheon had to do with my first encounter with radical femlibs in Boston. A graduate student, I emerged from a bookstore one grimy November afternoon, and ran smack into a convincing sidewalk hustler. She hustled femlib pamphlets, magazines, brochures, conviction, with a sales pitch both strident and effective. I ended up full owner of several brochures and one pamphlet, "No More Fun and Games."

It proved to be a dismal journal. Poetry, essays, fiction detailed marriage prisons brutalizing and stupid. Most of the stories vibrated with the potential of violence — physical and emotional — and it was difficult to decide which was the most fearful. Bitter and cramped lives, both men and women; twisted figures danced gruesome through a landscape of marriage mockery. Relations between men and women described there were so far beyond me, beyond the marriages I knew including my own, that the whole thing seemed alien beyond my sympathy.

But another, perhaps more significant reaction to those journals had endured, and sat uneasily with me at the conference luncheon. All around me I could hear talk of "the movement." The talk, and its meaning, seemed closely related to articles in the journals that urged women to unite in a common movement, with common aims. To that end, marriages stood indicted not as personal arrangements, but as social phenomena: not the personal, but "the class nature of the relationship" was important. And that, of course, by implication, meant our marriage.

I would not accept it as a whole truth. I would not accept anybody's attempt to judge a marriage of which I was a part by standards evolved from marriage in general. Within certain bounds, ours was a unique relationship; more than that, one whose components changed with time. No one had the right to clamp clumsy generalized judgements on it.

A similar instinctive antagonism to generalization sat with me during the luncheon. I heard about "male" oppression and "the movement," and I rebelled. Discreetly. To classify me or define me simply as a member of the oppressive male chauvinistic world — conspiring and plotting with others to keep women in the place they belonged — denigrated me as an individual, no less than individual women suffered a loss of themselves and their selfhood by blanket insistence they belonged in a movement by simple virtue of being female.

Yet that, too, was a partial truth; as a historian I could not deny that oppression and discrimination of groups, and the conflicts that engendered, were an essential part of our national history. In fact, much of political history might well be various minority groups' attempts to gain and use group power. Black and Irish, Catholic and Italian. And if true and justifiable for them, why not for women? I knew — of pay differentials, of institutional barriers, of demeaning attitudes towards "secretaries." But my insistence on being honest with the issue produced not enlightenment, but more confusion.

Lunch passed into the opening session, and that gave way to a panel discussion on Monday that proved to be a kind of primitive consciousness-raising session. Through it all, my confusion seemed to only deepen; I could not feel wholly at ease with the convinced and certain women on the panels. If women truly reshaped their roles, in ways unforeseen, then men must find their newness, too, as men and women had always defined each other. Perhaps only my comfortable habits were being challenged. In any case, I believed, Monday evening, that such confusion and uncertainty were the only personal consequences of the conference.

But a more subtle, perhaps a more important result was simmering. It surfaced, a day later, during the making of a lecture on social Darwinism. I had sketched several elements on a notepad for inclusion in the lecture, but they resisted forming into a pattern. Briefly, they resolved to these: Alice James, Jane Addams, and a historical account of 19th century black discrimination in America. Alice, sister of William and Henry, had composed a moving diary of her thought in the shrunken world of self-imposed bed exile, victim of "neurasthenia." Was the disease somehow social? Was there no place for an educated women in the late 19th century but in exile? Jane Addams, telling part of her own tale in 1892, described a young girl educated to sensitivity to social injustice, seeking responsible work, suddenly finding the way barred: "the family claim was strongly asserted." In a provocative new book on nineteenth century discrimination, a historian found disturbing parallels in white men's descriptions of blacks and women; both were childish and simple, alike saintly (or cursed), but both equally in need of care and protection. By whom and why?

The competitive ethics of social Darwinism suddenly offered a framework in which each of those items made sense. Social Darwinists

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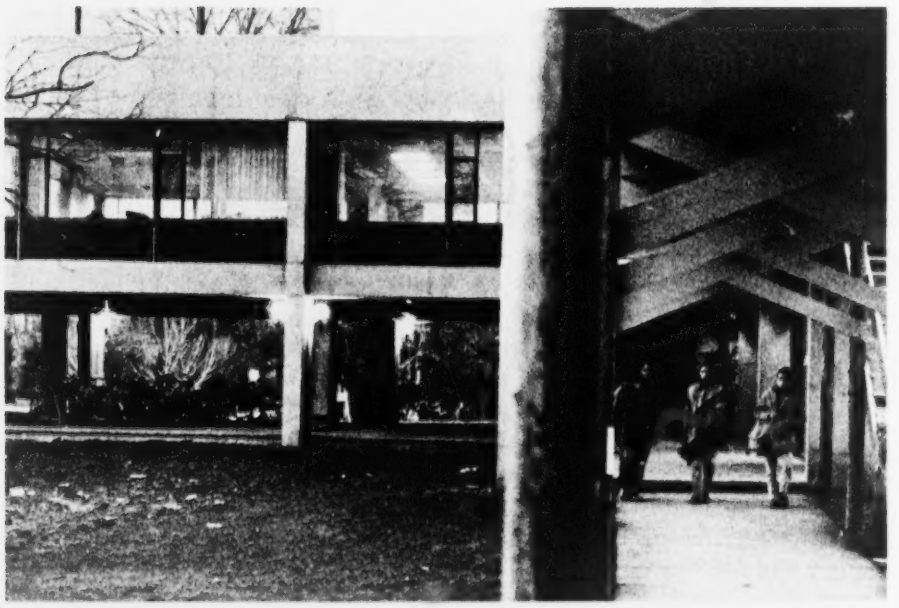
urged that life was a competition for the goods of nature and society. Many Americans at the time seemed to agree. Then of course it was logical, to them, that biologically inferiors, whether female, black, or insane, should be confined to safe roles and places, defined by those who **did** compete.

That interpretation could be extended into the new world of professionalism that began in the early twentieth century. Both men and women hacked out uncertain professional standards in those years. But specialities allowed to women — social work and teaching — only continued earlier protected roles, now garnished with degrees and training. When women did move into male-dominated professions, such as law or medicine, their niche was more closely but not less carefully cut: juvenile crime or pediatrics.

That discovery, such as it was, became part of a lecture on social change in nineteenth century America. It is difficult to determine just how important that one class was to any of the students. Some spoke to me after class, and several more wrote on the problem. But however wide its effect, learning of that kind is self-propagating: it opens sensitivities that seek out other patterns. Perhaps by that much is learning changed.

In this case, I think it was clear that learning may have been changed by the spreading ripples of uncertainty and some puzzlement that came out of the conference. I admit to some guilt in harping on the discovery of intellectual patterns that now seem so obvious. But the intellectual stimulus of both guilt and discovery are important to learning. If, in this case, there had been a female studies program on which I could have happily dumped both guilt and responsibility, changed learning might have been less likely for all of us.

— David S. Locke, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of American Studies
Kirkland College



After Kirkland, What?

The following statement was delivered by Iola S. Haverstick at a conference workshop entitled "After Kirkland, What?"

For two years, I lived in a tidy little Connecticut suburb that my son was later to characterize in his high school paper as a WASP ghetto. The only thing that made those years bearable was the fact that I managed to get a job, for me a fascinating one, at Yale University working on the Yale edition of the Boswell Papers, which are published, incidentally, by McGraw-Hill.

One night I went to a cocktail party in my tidy little Connecticut suburb and a male chauvinist who was there came up to me and said — in a tone of voice that made me feel as if I had just unwittingly committed an unspeakable act — "I hear **you** work." I muttered something about having to leave but he was relentless. "Just what do you do anyhow?" he continued. I told him that I worked on the Boswell Papers at Yale. "Who's Boswell?" he then demanded. I explained — rather patiently, I thought — that James Boswell was the friend and biographer of Samuel Johnson. I don't think I need tell you the thrust of his next question — but I will tell you my answer. Rising considerably taller than the six feet I already am, I said "Samuel Johnson was one of the four horsemen of Notre Dame football fame along with Geoffrey Chaucer, John Milton and Herman Melville." That man and I have not spoken since.

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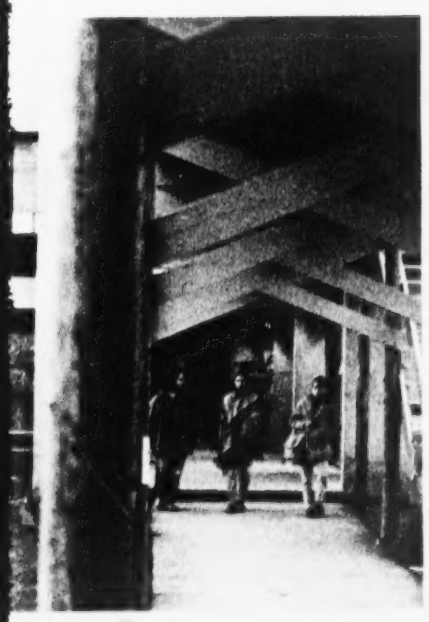

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But on to the educated woman and her responsibilities. I think the prime responsibility the educated woman has to herself is her own self-fulfillment as an individual. Now, what do we mean by self-fulfillment. I think that today when we talk about the educated woman and her individual self-fulfillment, we are talking about an educated woman's option to choose her own life style, that is, to choose how she will live and what she will become. And this is really a radical departure from the past when marriage was virtually a must for a woman — it seems, by the way, that the only people who want to get married today are priests and nuns — and the concept of a spinster was a stereotype. Nobody today, I think, would call Gloria Steinem a spinster.

Now, clearly not everyone will choose the freewheeling life style of a Gloria Steinem who disdains marriage and freely admits that she has had an abortion, but the image of the unmarried career woman as a sort of sexless social pariah is clearly a thing of the past. Similarly, the educated woman who does marry has the option or should have the option to determine what she will become or how she can best fulfill herself as an individual — even in the suburbs. This, I think, is really the crux of the new feminism, as I see it — the option to become what one wants to become.

Now, what are the educated woman's responsibilities towards society? I think the educated woman has a responsibility to be responsive to society and social conditions although the degree of responsiveness will vary of course, according to the individual. I think she has the responsibility to be a reasonably informed individual — I say reasonably because there hasn't been a complete body of knowledge that educated individuals could comprehend since the 17th century, before, in John Donne's words, "the new astronomy cast all in doubt." I also think the educated woman has a responsibility to be a good citizen and all that entails, including protest when she believes protest is called for. I think she also has a responsibility to be responsible for her actions and to respect the rights of others.

Now, this is all quite abstract, as well as Pollyannaish I realize, but I think it would be presumptuous of me to be specific. I do have one concrete suggestion, however, and that is that you have as few children as possible because, as you know, we are rapidly running out of earth.

The third aspect of the question I am supposed to say something about is the educated woman's responsibility towards her college. And this is awkward for me because I serve on the board of this college as well as on the board of my Alma Mater, Barnard College. I suppose Alma Mater is a sexist concept, by the way, but I have found no substitute. Anyhow, from the vantage point of a trustee, the educated woman's responsibility towards her college is to give her college money. But I don't think that is quite what ought to be said here. Besides, your responsibility to Kirkland in this area will depend on the

quality of your Kirkland experience and your general thinking about the value of a college education. So perhaps these are the things that we ought to be talking about. And I think the best way to handle this from my point of view is to tell you something about the quality of my college experience and how, as my Trusteeships indicate, I became hooked on women's education. First, because it is part of the story, it should be said that I grew up in what was then the sheltered exclusiveness of private schools, where just about everyone I knew came from a background similar to mine. My "high school" was an isolated Episcopal church school in Virginia where we spent almost as much time in chapel reinforcing our belief in the Protestant ethic as we did in the classroom. At least a third of my classmates never even applied to a college while at least two or three received certificates as opposed to diplomas. Now, as you know, colleges — with the possible exception of Harvard — have cycles of popularity in terms of the number of applications that are received. The popular colleges of my day were Vassar and Smith with the edge going to Vassar as the more elite and intellectual. Barnard was considered socially second-rate. I applied to Vassar and to Smith and was accepted at both due, extraordinary as it may seem to you, to exceptionally high board scores. My actual marks were not exceptional, however, as I did as little studying as I could because I had evolved a system designed to beat the establishment. Courses I knew I was going to get an 80 or 90 in because they interested me were balanced against courses I hated and could afford to get a 40 or even a 30 in because the ultimate result would be a 60 or a 70 average and a 60 average was all I needed to graduate.

Thus, I arrived at Vassar with a social and intellectual arrogance that can only be described in retrospect as rank stupidity. Once again, I associated only with what we used to call "my own kind" and once again I was confident that I could lick the establishment. But I had failed to reckon on the relative freedom afforded by the college situation (to me who had been cooped up for three years in a Virginia nunnery that freedom seemed boundless) as well as the fact that the system in terms of flunking courses was a bit different. Instead of attending classes in Poughkeepsie, I attended parties in New York and New Haven. The end result of this hedonistic pursuit was a flunked course at the end of the year and a letter telling me not to return to Vassar. I was stunned. Things like this just didn't happen to me. My mother and I went to see the Dean of Vassar, but to no avail. Vassar had considered me a bright prospect and I had blown it. Further, as it turned out, my attitude at Vassar had been considered just as bad as my grades and that was the clincher.

My parents rallied behind me and together we worked out a constructive program that eventually led to my admission to Barnard — though on probation. The reason my parents were willing to help me was based on my realization that I really wanted a college education

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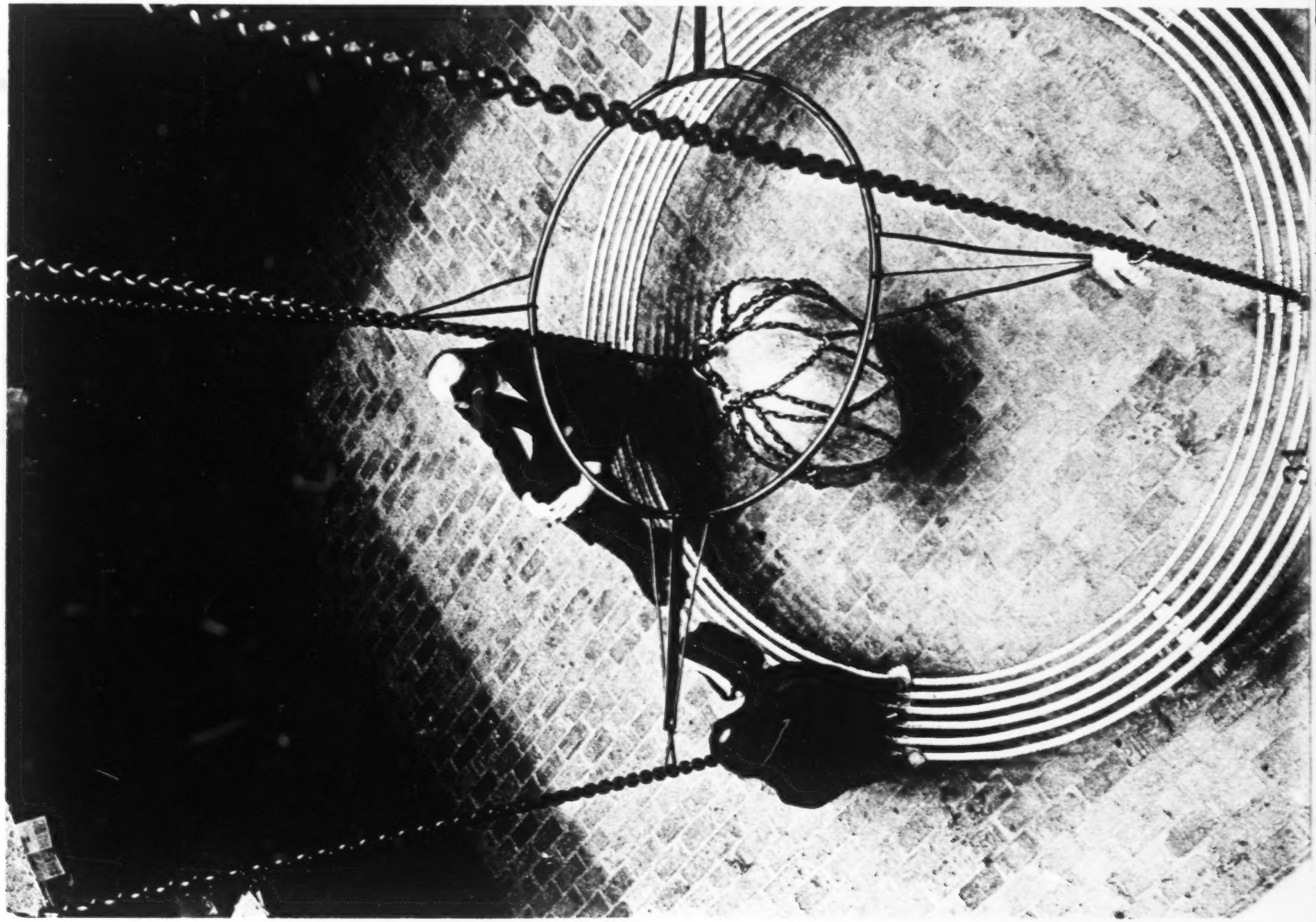
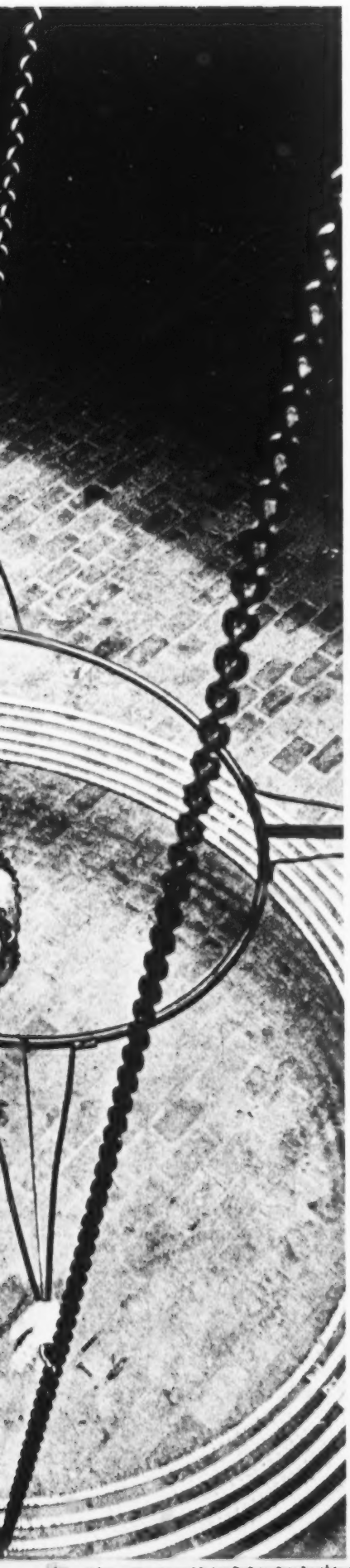
and that I had been shamed into this realization by my Vassar experience which, needless to say, was one of the best things that ever happened to me. At Barnard I not only gained an awareness and an appreciation and a capacity for friendship with people from backgrounds that were different from mine, but I also at the same time gained an awareness and an appreciation and a capacity for friendship with the printed word which has not only found expression in the jobs I have had, but is also ever a source of pleasure. So I am grateful for both the quality of my Barnard experience and the quality of my Barnard education. As my Kirkland Trusteeship testifies, however, I also believe that there is no one way to educate a woman (or a man either) and that the more she can assume the responsibility for her own education, the more valuable she will find it.

—Iola Haverstick
Kirkland Trustee
Barnard Trustee





at kirkland

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